



Africa

WHITE SISTERS

NOVEMBER-DECEMBER
1956

Happy and Blessed Christmas



Christmas is essentially the feast of peace and love. That peace and love which the Divine Child alone can give is sadly needed in the world today. Christmas brings us back on our knees before the Infant Savior. There at the foot of the Manger let us pray for all mankind. Let us remember the infidels and Moslems, as well as the Communists of the whole world; so that, they may come to know and love their Blessed Redeemer.

Let us pray also that the thousands of Missionaries, who are working among them, may be strengthened and encouraged to carry on their work with sustained heroism until the day dawns when from every land arises the hymn of adoration and praise to the Infant King of Bethlehem.

The Missionaries and the souls who, with your help, they brought into the Church will ask this peace and happiness for their many and generous benefactors whom they will not forget at the crib.

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THE SAHARA

Majesty of the Desert

By THE MOST REV. GEORGE MERCIER, W.F.

Books, photographs and the movies have familiarized the whole world with the magnificent vistas of the Sahara — the dazzling sun, the immense solitude, the bare horizons of this land of silence and loneliness. And herein lies its fascination, for nowhere else does Nature appear in all its simple and unadorned beauty, whether we think of the trackless sand, or a green oasis, or of the rocky wastes over which roams an almost invisible trail. . . . There is nothing in the desert — yet its very emptiness has a majesty and dignity which must imperceptibly permeate the souls of those who live within its confines.

The people who live long in the desert, if they wish to survive, must acquire some of the characteristics of their home. In this land of heat and fire, life can be sustained only by continuous and painstaking effort. In this land of light and shadow, the reflective soul acquires a habit of seeing to the heart of things, leaving behind the trappings of our complicated civilization. But most of all, in this brooding land of silence, one can meet God, who is present in the immensity of its distances, feeling that Presence leading one to true prayer and adoration.

THE LAND

From North to South the Sahara



A caravan passes through the gorge of El Kantara.

extends over a thousand miles, and from East to West almost twice that distance — the largest mission field almost entirely controlled by European powers. Travel over these tremendous reaches is usually by airplane or car; camels are now used only for travel between some military posts in the extreme South.

Most people think of the Sahara as one undulating mass of sand dunes, but nothing could be farther from the truth: within its limits are hills and plateaus up to 4000 feet high, and even some mountains towering almost 9000 feet in the air; there are also large areas of flat rocky or sandy ground, and oases of various sizes flourishing in the fertile soil of now-dry riverbeds.

All through this varied land-

scape rudimentary routes zigzag, trying to find the best way through or around obstacles. . . . Their "washboard" surfaces are hard on vehicles, and harder still on the travellers, for often they must get out and help to push the car out of ruts or sand-drifts.

THE CLIMATE

The climate of the Sahara is extremely variable. In the North, the plateaus and mountains are covered with snow and ice during the winter, while in the South, the oases have Summer temperatures as high as 125° Fahrenheit in the shade, with more endurable temperatures during the winter months — something like an ordinary summer day in the United States. However, newcomers soon get accustomed to the torrid heat,



A nomadic home in the Sahara.

and after a few years in the Sahara they are prone to suffer from the cold at night much more than from the heat of the day.

The climate of the desert is extremely dry: electricity in the air sometimes makes trucks and other metal objects quite unapproachable . . . There is also a great deal of wind here. Everything is harsh and violent in the desert, except, as a Saharan will quote, "the dawn and the twilight—the weather from October to November—the sheep's fleece—and the fruit of the date-palm".

THE PEOPLE

It has been said that the Sahara is an ocean of sand, with little islands where the refugees of a thousand shipwrecks have taken shelter . . . As a matter of fact,

for the most part, this unproductive and inhospitable land is inhabited by people driven to it in desperation.

Nothing much is known about the first inhabitants. There is a theory that there were Negroes living in the Sahara before the invasion of the Berbers, who are of the white race, and this may well be true. The Berbers, coming from either Europe or Asia, intermarried with Ethiopians, then with their Arab conquerors in the seventh and twelfth centuries, and later with Sudanese Negroes brought to the Sahara as slaves. The Berber language is still spoken by the Mozabites, the Ouarglis, the Touareg and a few tribes of the Touat-Gourara region; everywhere else, Arabic prevails.



Oasis dwellers in a street of Kairouan.

According to the latest figures, the Sahara has a population of about 920,000 persons: half a million nomads who shepherd their livestock on the plateaus, and 420,000 oasis-dwellers who are settled tillers of the soil. In addition, there are a few thousand Jews and 8000 Europeans, mostly Government officials and military personnel living in the more populous centers.

The two main characteristics of Saharan society are poverty and stagnation. The perpetual dryness and hard climate keep the people in a continuous state of extreme poverty, and living standards quite naturally remain at a very low level in the face of almost unbelievable hardship. The oasis-dwellers wage a continual battle against the encroaching sand, and

must also irrigate their fields from primitive and unhandy wells, except in a few cases where artesian wells have brought a certain ease and better living conditions for their progressive owners . . .

The nomads also alternate between periods of comparative wealth and complete destitution, the result of seasonal drought and rain on their grazing lands. In spite of all the help which the government now is trying to give them, most Saharans fight a constant grim battle for sheer survival.

There is only one way of escaping this struggle: going to the North to work. The more intelligent and energetic men leave their homes and families and spend months at a time in one of the three northern most Depart-

ments or provinces, to make money for their families. It is estimated that as much as one-third of the entire male population of the Sahara is continually away "in the North".

THE SAHARAN MISSION

Mission work in the Sahara officially started on August 6, 1868, when the Apostolic Prefecture of the Sahara-Sudan was established, with Bishop (later Cardinal) Lavigerie as the Apostolic Delegate. This territory was later separated from the Sudan, becoming an Apostolic Prefecture in its own right.

The beginnings were difficult. The first mission, at Laghouat, in 1872, soon had to be abandoned, and two caravans of White Fathers crossing the Sahara were attacked and the six priests killed. However, missions were eventually established at Ghardaia and Ouargla, at Biskra and again at Laghouat. The White Sisters now have fourteen mission posts in the Sahara: two each at Ghardaia, El Golea, Laghouat and Biskra, and one each at Djelfa, Touggourt, El-Oued, Ain-Sefra, Colomb-Bechar and Geryville.

THE WHITE SISTERS IN THE SAHARA

During the torrid summer months, everyone who can possibly get away goes North to escape the terrible heat — except the White Sisters who are as busy as ever: this is the time when the Saharans need their help most, for the climate saps their strength and leaves them an easy prey to

the contagious diseases which are prevalent in these regions.

The Sisters stay at their posts in the hospitals and dispensaries, where hundreds come each day to be cared for. They stay at their posts in the schools where little girls of 11 or 13 must be taught, with infinite patience, the principles of weaving and handicraft, or the first elements of reading and writing; where slightly older girls, almost entirely ignorant of any notion of hygiene and cleanliness, must be initiated into the mysteries of basic housekeeping and child-care.

The White Sisters' task is to be counsellors and guides to these women who have learned to love and trust them. They prepare for this task both professionally and linguistically. The language preparation is undertaken at their house of studies in Tunis, and continues throughout their life, for every Sister, no matter how long she has been at her post or how tiring her day has been, spends an hour each day studying the language and customs of her people in order to grow in sympathetic understanding of those with whom she is in daily contact. The technical preparation in nursing, social work or teaching is made at one of the four schools maintained for that purpose by the Congregation. Thus they remain true to the wishes of their Founder, Cardinal Lavigerie, who wanted them to be ready for any task to be done in fulfillment of their primary work in the Sahara: the moral regeneration of the Moslem woman in these bleak regions.

MISSION TO THE WOMEN

By MOTHER DOMNIN

Cardinal Lavigerie's intense desire for the Sisters was that they might be ALL things to the African women . . . an apostolate which can be looked at only through the eyes of FAITH.

Sooner or later, in every person's life there comes a time when he or she re-examines the past efforts of faded years by posing the question: "Is it really worthwhile?" So, too, the age-old question comes creeping back into the life of each Sister whose apostolate is dedicated to the women of the Moslem world and she asks herself from time to time: "Is this work really vital . . . or are we but wasting our time?"

According to the majority of opinions which would emphatically answer our question, we quote: "You are only wasting your time. These women will always be lazy, they will always be liars and thieves." An example is then added and one of the most favorite is the story of the lice-covered, starving youth who was taken in by charitable people, washed, clothed and restored to health . . . only to turn his back on his gracious benefactors without a single word of thanks, and return to his former wretched existence. . . .

This example is but one in many and the White Sister herself envisages the numerous conditions where children are presently running about the streets dirty and ragged, their eyes rimmed with nauseating sores—she thinks of the boys of today, so much addicted to vice from their youth because of

a father's former indulgence in lust—She sees young girls of 13 or 14 years sold as second wives to rich men of 60—girls whose lives will end in divorce perhaps before they are even out of their teens—She is saddened by the lives of women who are literally prisoners inside of locked doors, spending long hours and days in grinding meal and gossiping over innumerable cups of coffee or tea—of other women who are seen after dark, provocative ghosts in their phantom draperies—and finally she winces when she thinks of the old hags who brew their love potions and poisons and who foster nothing but fear and hatred in their society.

Is this, then, the way God wants His desert children to live? No, it is only the result of ignorance and hatred, of all the machinations of the Evil One who has long claimed this land as his own. . . . And yet, there is ANOTHER side to the picture, another aspect to be investigated. The opposite side is the Lord's and it mirrors His beauty, His joy, His love in a thousand ways: the brilliant white of apricot blossoms, the golden bunches of dates in the dazzling sun, the clear blue sky and the yellow sand.

From the materials God has placed at hand, the Saharan has

*Whether visiting the
Nomads at their tent or
the dwellers of the Oases,
the White Sister teaches*



*the women to become
good wives and mothers
in order to play their
role in the family.*

fashioned beautiful things; a reflection of the infinite glory of the Creator shines in the deep reds and rich blues of carpets, in the graceful fullness of billowing garments, in the delicately-worked gold and brass of goblets and dishes, in the massive richness of coral and silver jewelry, in the plaintive song of the shepherd's reed flutes: a harmony of sound, color and design, beauty which can come only from God and which can be seen only with the eyes of Faith.

And what of the Moslem woman? Does nothing remain of her pristine glory? Yes, there are still traces of it in her delicate beauty, her fine features, the unconscious dignity and grace of her movements as she weaves the family's clothes, cooks the simple meals, rocks her last-born child. She has kept the realism and charm of persons untouched by our chaotic civilization, and remains attached to the plain routine of her daily existence. She is deeply intuitive and extremely sensitive, with a desperate desire to be happy and to fulfill her role in life.

It is our task to show these women that happiness lies in doing God's will. We must help

them to acquire an understanding heart, a persevering will to do good, a need to show sympathy, devotedness, sweetness, a desire to GIVE! We must help them to be free, for without freedom there can be no true love of God. All this must be done by teaching them to be better wives and mothers, while respecting the desirable moral and social customs of their tribe and family.

Our conclusion, therefore, is the fact that it IS worthwhile . . . for these are God's people and this is why the Sisters continue in their efforts to teach homemaking, child care, family hygiene; they become trusted friends, often consulted about family and social problems; but most of all, they demonstrate in all their words and actions the true dignity of woman and the beauty of a fully-developed spiritual life. They dedicate their charity, their intelligence, their zeal to this special end. They adopt this people as their own, not forgetting the country which gave them birth, but loving their new land as a mother loves the child who needs her most — they offer their lives, in union with the life and death of Christ, to ransom this land from the shadow of death hovering over it.



OUR FRONT COVER

The smile of this Ouargla woman, one of the first Christians of her oasis, radiates the peace and joy that her religion has brought into her life.

HOMEMAKING CLASS IN THE SAHARA

By Sr. THEOTIME

The necessity of good housekeeping is one of the basic means which cannot be too much stressed in the education of today's desert inhabitants.

Sister knocked at a rough door identical with all the other doors of the tightly-cramped houses which lined the narrow street.

"Who is it?" responded a voice from the interior.

At the Sister's friendly tone the door suddenly opened wide, and words came out so quickly from the speaker's mouth that Sister could only pick up a phrase here and there to know that she was entirely welcome. "Come in, Sister, come right in. How are you? Fine? God be praised. Come in . . . sit down . . . make yourself at home . . . my house is yours!"

The latter traditional phrase took a seat in the corner of the Sister's mind as she discreetly looked about her at the disorder which reigned, from the tiny courtyard to every nook and crack of the filthy walls surrounding the debris. The thought still stuck: "My house is YOURS" — Dear me, what would mother say if this were our own house back home? After all the years of teaching her little girl the necessities of keeping an orderly house! Well, it won't be in vain now . . . at least indirectly, Mama.

M'Barka continued bustling

about, still prattling all the while and Sister had nothing to do or say but just respond with a smile. "Sit here, Sister . . . no wait, here's a cushion . . . there now, sit down and rest a while. It's been so long since you came to see me . . . and I've been longing for you to come each day."

As fast as she spoke so much the faster did her hands busy themselves in trying to hide the things most likely to shock Sister, for she knew almost instinctively that order was lacking; but the poor woman had not the slightest solution with which to rearrange affairs, since no one had ever taken the trouble to teach her even the bare essentials.

Her youthful attractiveness could still be seen in this slender, intelligent, former tent-dweller whose beauty had not vanished in spite of the delicate tattooing of the face, a characteristic mark of the nomad tribes. Although now she is a prisoner for life within the walls of the meager courtyard of her husband, she continues to sigh longingly over the memories of her childhood — a nostalgia which creeps over one who has passed any length of time in the wide

horizons of the desert. She listens eagerly now, as Sister relates her own childhood tales when she ran and played in the garden after leaving the house with her mother's parting admonition still ringing in her ears: "Be careful now . . . don't get dirty or tear your dress!"

"Did she ALWAYS say that?" asked M'Barka with interest. "And if you DID tear it, did she beat you?"

"Oh, no, M'Barka," Sister replied laughingly. "But, you know, back home a little girl with a torn or dirty dress isn't very pretty, and mother would have to remedy the situation right away."

Then M'Barka continued reflectively: "With us it wasn't like that. If I tore my dress I would just take a little stone and a piece of wool and then tie the cloth so

that the hole wouldn't show. And, of course, if the inside of our tent got too dirty . . . well, we just picked it up and moved to another place . . . you know how the desert is."

But Sister was nonetheless discouraged because she knew that M'Barka loved pretty things and so she asked: "M'Barka, do you like flowers, or a new dress, or perhaps a shawl with fringe? I used to love all those things too and so mother would teach us how to take good care of our possessions. Wouldn't you like to try to make your home as lovely as a flower?"

M'Barka's eyes lit up instantly, only to be dimmed again by the saddened gaze when she said: "Is it POSSIBLE to do anything with this tiny house?"

Returning home with the supply of water.



"Oh, yes," explained Sister eagerly, "but first, you must ask the permission of your husband to come with your next-door neighbor to our school. There we have a little house, just like yours, where young girls are taught how to make their home beautiful and you will see for yourself what can be done."

So one day M'Barka came to the school, accompanied by another young woman — just to visit, of course — for her dignity as a married woman would never allow her to follow the classes with these young girls. But she DID take a tremendous interest as she watched the 50 little girls running and playing in the yard. At the sound of the bell, they stopped shortly, formed ranks and filed in to their little "house-school".

The little homemaking school was just beginning, to be sure, but already it had taken on the atmosphere of a real house, exactly like the girls' homes; and this task of the Sisters was stimulated by the necessity to raise the moral level of these young girls, thus penetrating their society through the means of proper bodily discipline and a sound healthy environment.

The foremost of intentions which inspired this program was to give the children a love of cleanliness and a balanced sense of well-being in performing the elementary acts of hygiene. Cleanliness is a virtue not always easy to teach to the children of the Sahara . . . and . . . sad to say, this is not because they have no liking for



While the little ones are taught to knit,

*the older girls are taught to sew . . .
even on a machine.*



water, but because there is so little of it! Their only source of water must be sometimes carried from miles away in containers of skins which limit their precious supply to be used for the foremost needs of cooking, drinking, etc. This scarcity of water only heightens the opinion that washing is but a waste of the refreshing liquid. Yet, the lessons are continued with the persevering hope that, perhaps someday, they will be accustomed to the worthwhile satisfaction of cleanliness that they will consider as indispensable an extra journey with this principle in mind.

Thus the day at the home-making school begins with showers and a fast getting-into the school uniform. At least for a short time, these youths are transformed into clean, well-combed and remarkably pretty young girls. Following this "refresher course" their muscles are stretched a bit to the tune of physical exercising which puts them in shape for a little intellectual work where the studies of housekeeping and sewing are foremost in the education. Everything is strictly based on the fundamentals, of course, and so brooms, dustcloths and dishrags

are set humming with activity as the girls plunge into their respective tasks of cleaning, dusting, washing and wiping pots and pans, etc. No detail is left undone in the process, and even the table for the evening meal must be set in a spotless and perfectly-swept atmosphere.

Upstairs, in the little sewing class, awkward fingers tangle with inexperienced needles in tiny pieces of cloth. Earnest efforts are sewn into each stitch with the longing expectation that the day will soon come when they will be able to make lovely things like the elaborate handkerchief delicately displayed in the hands of an older girl . . . or perhaps even a wedding dress like the engaged girls have expertly fashioned . . . all by hand.

The school's program leaves no minute detail untouched in the search of bringing to these women a culture which portrays cleanliness, order, and physical well-being adapted to the needs of local conditions. Thus many women like M'Barka are trained and instructed not only for their own benefits, but also for the greater moral and spiritual good of all involved.

HAVE YOU ANY?

We are badly in need of books for our missions. We should be pleased with any books you might have for elementary and high school levels . . . for college students . . . Catholic novels . . . religious reading. All will be useful for our many schools.

Kindly address your parcels to: White Sisters Convent, 319 Middlesex Ave., Metuchen, N. J., and we shall forward them to our missions.

SAHARAN CRAFTS SPELL BEAUTY

By MOTHER GERMAINE MARIE

The importance of Saharan handicraft leads to progressive civilization for the woman.

While contemplating the problems which confront the ordinary women of the Sahara today, it must not be forgotten that the artistic aptitude for creating beauty out of the most rudimentary elements has been a God-given inspiration dating way back along their ancestral family tree.

WEAVING

Because of her special abilities behind the loom, the door has already been opened to a new life in which she may confidently hold a place of prominence in the home. The outstanding role that weaving plays in the part of the Arabs cannot be overlooked at this time, because a capable woman who knows how to handle her loom skillfully can develop her latent artistic talents by every manner of means . . . delicately using her gifted hands to express her inward intelligence by an outward sign.

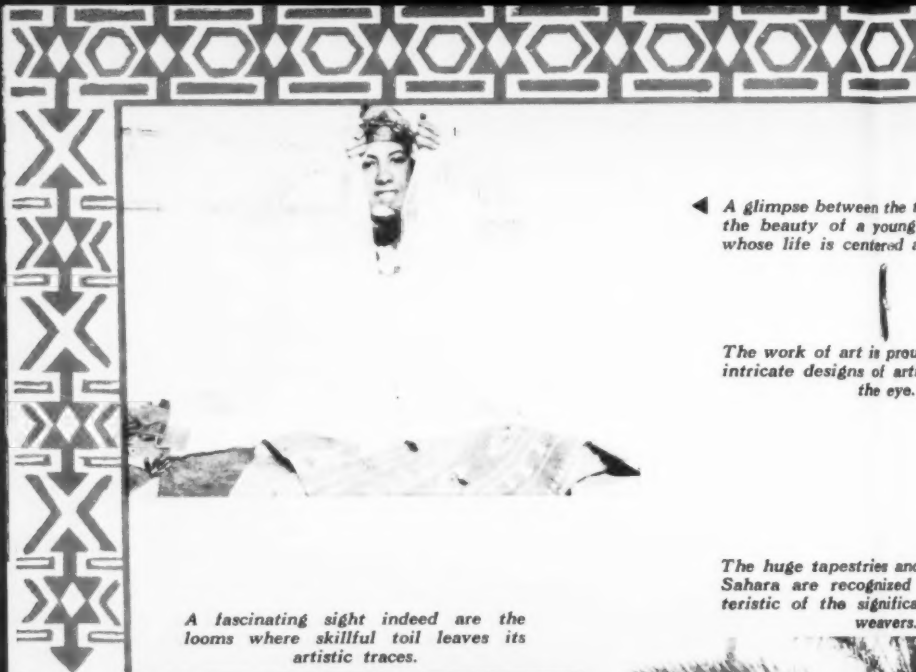
With this prospective in mind, little girls are gradually being sent to school even in their early years; but the course of handicraft must not be neglected, for her parents consider her education incomplete if she does not acquire skill with her hands — and her future married happiness depends upon this

most basic outlook. While she is developing her natural talents at the loom, corresponding efforts are made to expand her intellectual gifts at the same time; so, hand in hand, these two inseparable necessities are slowly weaving the design to better understanding and greater family stability in the home.

ECONOMICS

It is a fact that the traditional wealth of the Arab is centered about his practical and artistic accomplishments at the loom. Patterns which express depths of living have been passed down through the ages and preserved as sacred treasures. Thus it can be rightly said that the Egyptian weaver who lived eons before our era can still be spotted in the design of the nomad today who uses his identical technique which slightly differs according to tribe and family.

In times of famine and hardship due to draught or other similar tragedies which are quite common even today, women and children are seen besieging our workrooms to find at the loom their only hope of survival. So we see that this great and traditional way



◀ A glimpse between the
the beauty of a young
whose life is centered t

The work of art is prou
intricate designs of art
the eye.

A fascinating sight indeed are the
looms where skillful toil leaves its
artistic traces.



The huge tapestries and
Sahara are recognized
teristic of the significa
weavers.



ween the threads portrays
a young desert dweller
centered about her loom.

rt is proudly revealed as
ns of artistic color meet
the eye.



stries and carpets of the
cognized as the charac-
significant lives of the
weavers.



The elevated ideal of the girls is re-
flected in their finished product.



of living not only proves a valuable asset in the field of art, but often determines the choice between life and death in times of great necessity.

ARTISTIC EXPRESSION

No less important than the material aspect is the means it provides the Arab woman to express the depths of the oriental soul. She embraces the accumulation of artistic endeavor from ages past and deserves the appreciation and recognition of modern civilization. The wealth of color and design reveals the artistic genius which has been handed down to her and strengthened through the generations.

The soul of the East is stirred by vivid colors, as dawn against snowclad mountains, the dazzling reflection of sunlight on brass, the ebony blackness of high-piled coiffures.

Tapestries and carpets reveal their portrayal of nature's coloring in the fiery reds and midnight blues combined in the complex geometrical designs which are specifically their own.

ENCOURAGEMENT

While striving to preserve and perfect all that is good and beautiful in Arab culture, we try to blend it into an educational plan which will give the children of today a brighter outlook into the future than the drab existence of their mothers.

To make any contact succeed, we must know and apply all that touches and influences our pupils: their thoughts and aspirations, en-

vironment and background, customs and religion — so different from our own. Since all our little girls are destined for marriage and motherhood, our training has to tend in a practical way to fit them in this calling.

This creates the complexity of varying techniques from one locality to the next, for customs and traditions may differ completely, and our teaching program must conform to the local needs.

Because we insist so pointedly on preserving these handicrafts and arts in all our missions, some readers may be prone to object that we are not giving sufficient attention to the progress of evolution. However, the recent surge towards general improvement throughout the Arab world indicates that woman is finding her place in society from which she has been barred so long.

FUTURE

There is much in the Eastern woman capable of raising her to a better way of life. She has been endowed with a keen intelligence and intuition to direct her towards high ideals and accomplishment. We not only do not check the individual incentive of our pupils, but encourage them to draw out from the very depths the artistic and creative ability which comes from their forefathers. Holy Mother Church, here as well as elsewhere, is anxious to preserve and stimulate the wealth of art by keeping to the pattern of its own people . . . our task is to bring it ever higher into the scope of greater ideals and artistic development.

SHOWING THE WAY

"We will not perform miracles of power as Our Lord did, but let us perform miracles of charity: by this sign we will be known as His disciples." (Cardinal Lavigerie.)

Where do they all come from — those hundreds streaming to the hospital daily?

From Biskra itself, or "the souk" as they call it here — but also from the surrounding villages of M'cid, Sidi Barkat, Bab el Darb, and all the other little towns with narrow streets where rough palm-trunk doors hide untold distress and misery.

Many others come from the "Zab", the country surrounding Biskra, and still others travel all the way from the mountains of Aures: these are the "Chaouias", Berbers who differ from the Arabs in language and character.

For eight months of the year, the hospital is filled to capacity and everything hums at top speed. When the heat comes, however, there is a general exodus toward the "Tell", where the grass is always green and there is work to be had in the fields. The hospital is "too hot" for all except the desperately ill.

The Chaouia refuses to spend the summer at Biskra, and the inhabitant of Biskra prefers to remain in the comparative coolness of his home with its few tiny windows and darkened rooms, resting in the shade during the day and sleeping on his quiet terrace at night: much better, he thinks, than the hospital with its long

wards and large windows hygienically open to the broiling sun, especially since the building is mostly stone and plaster instead of sun-dried bricks which would repel the heat. "I will enter the hospital in the fall," says the patient to himself, unless he is really in urgent need. And what will they do in the meantime? Just suffer patiently.

Most of the patients are very poor, for the prejudice of well-to-do families against the foreigners' hospital is only just beginning to weaken. The poor come in droves, in threadbare and dirty burnous and gandourahs, with worn slippers falling off at each step, their shabbiness making them even more pitiful than their illness. The typhoid sufferer unconscious in his torn rags—the malarial child with yellow skin and shivering body — the young girl with tuberculosis, for whom the slightest touch or movement is agony: these and many others like them fill the ward with compassion.

To these people, most of whom have never been in a European's home, the hospital routine is a bewildering and frightening novelty: the hospital garment, the rooms, the bed, the schedule. The Sisters must know the background of their patients, the sort of life they have always lived, in order to un-



No effort is neglected to bring relief to the suffering.

derstand their difficulties in adjusting, and lend a sympathetic ear to their complaints and requests, whether reasonable or not. Each Sister must make her patients feel as much at home as possible right from the start, and not only from natural compassion for a suffering human being, but from a sense of supernatural interest and charity towards a child of God who needs her help.

In addition to a thorough professional training, with special emphasis on the particular needs of the population, the Sister must have a constant care to discipline and hygiene, and exercise close and patient supervision of the African aids. Most of all, for the few days or weeks of his stay, the patient must breathe in a family

atmosphere, where kindness, mutual help and charity are evident — an atmosphere quite new to most of them, but one which will leave in their minds an idea of the worth of true fraternal affection. Such charity in action can lead souls to acknowledge God, and to love Him!

But it is not merely sufficient to show charity to the patients; they, too, must have the opportunity, and be stimulated to desire to show charity to others. First, the Sister must lead the way through her own actions. The “showier” things—such as medicines, operations, X-rays, the things that are for “everyone” — are taken for granted by the patients; but the little things — a show of true personal interest, politeness at all

times, gentleness in the care given, even firmness in maintaining discipline when it is permeated by true kindness—these lead the patient to think: "The Sister really likes me . . .", and that is exactly the impression each one should take from a stay at the hospital.

The Sisters would like to return their patients to their homes in good health, capable of fulfilling their social and family duties, and with a new sense of kindness and compassion towards their neighbor. A deeper aim is to awaken the voice of conscience in hardened or ignorant souls: a difficult task, to lift earthly souls, burdened with illness and suffering, to a sense of higher things.

A very necessary part of the daily routine at the hospital is keeping the patients busy and diverted, rather than immersed in unhealthy introspection. Some of the men are able to read, but few have a taste for reading; for the

majority, time drags by slowly. This is even more general among the women, for most of them are illiterate, incapable of sustained mental effort, and completely lost without the household tasks which filled their days. For them, there would be only the tedium of whiling away the hours between meals and treatments with endless gossiping and singing, if it were not for the Sister who comes around to tell stories and show pictures that interest and instruct them gently, and stay in their minds as a diversion from their suffering and boredom.

These are the days and nights of the hospital Sister: the daily routine of treatment, meals or visits; patience and good humor in spite of the heat and the burning wind; the continual practice of Christian charity; the secret and total abandonment of a consecrated soul to the will of its heavenly Spouse.

ANOTHER OF MARY'S VICTORIES

A poor woman who had apostatized about 30 years previously when she was married outside the Church, arrived at the hospital in the advanced stages of cancer. On her arrival, the Chaplain visited her and spoke of the eternal welfare of her soul. At first she appeared docile to his admonitions, but later outside influence brought about a change of heart and she refused to go to confession.

Perhaps it was an occasion chosen by our Lady to show the power of her intercession, because,

from the very first moment the invalid consented to wear the medal Sister offered her, visible signs of grace were present. In an incredibly short time, she understood the error of her ways and was happy to confess her sins in order to receive the last sacraments.

Shortly afterwards, she passed away. Her excellent dispositions gave proof of Mary's power as "Refuge of Sinners," as was seen in this soul whose eternal welfare was given in her charge.

"EN STAGE" IN NORTH AFRICA

By SR. M. BONAVENTURA

"The year's training at St. Mary's enables our young professed Sisters to get an actual glimpse of real missionary life as she goes "en stage" to various surrounding posts.

At last the long anticipated moment had finally arrived, and breathlessly I received the news from our Superior that I was to accompany one of our Mothers to visit mission posts — the climax that every young Sister patiently (and sometimes impatiently) waits for during her years of missionary training in Algiers. Going "en stage", as we call it here, can mean anything from assisting at the dispensary to climbing sand-dunes with a group of young Arabs . . . and my "stage" ended up in a little bit of everything, as you will soon see.

AIN SEFRA

The happy day of departure found us on a little train impetuously headed for Perregoux, our first stop, after leaving Algiers. The locomotive, with its retinue of cars, clung magnetically to the rails which were literally "pinned" to the slopes. As it curled its way through passes and slinked over chasms I thought (between gasping breaths) that St. Christopher and our Guardian Angels will be greatly relieved when the journey is over. Soon I was lost in the

beauty of God's nature which revealed the dark, towering mountains predominating over multi-colored fields, an infinite number of exotic trees, cacti, flowers and grasses — a bit of California-Florida combined, and even more!

After a quick change of trains at Perregoux, we found ourselves rolling into the station of Ain Sefra where the Sisters were there waiting to show us around. Here we found a miniature world of knowledge open to the almost 300 pupils of the schools of Academics, Tapestries, Embroidery and Sewing — and last, but not least — the kindergarten! Dramatics and musical talent had not been neglected by any means, and the classes aptly presented a "Mother's Day Program" for all the villagers to enjoy in the large parish hall.

The closing day of a public Novena was followed later by a Pontifical High Mass, in honor of the Blessed Sacrament, with a most impressive procession through the grounds of the White Fathers' House. The non-Christians looked on in their customary wide-eyed fashion, but serious faces were to be seen here and there which

seemed to recognize the whole thing as being quite sacred.

Then came Saturday — which means the realization of an excitedly anticipated promenade, or sometimes a picnic for the children. Starting out with two classes of more than 80 girls, we headed for the highest sand-dune with no lesser intention than reaching its summit. In spite of our faulty steps, slackened by the weight of years, the teachers and I finally arrived, and in between breathless puffs were encouraged by the shouts and cheers of the “small fry” who had already reached the pinnacle, gleaming golden in the brilliant sunlight. After a few moments of Sisterly debating, we plunged forward, onward and upward to meet the dazzling blue sky which hung heavily over this celestial view.

So high up were we, that surely the angels wings could have conveniently wiped the sand from our eyes.

Ah, and now for the descent! The colorfully-clad lasses literally swam down the dune, while we more agedly dignified souls managed a most awkward tumble earthwards in a rather “ungraceful” fashion. However, religious composure was soon restored as we “hit” bottom with a bound.

Sunday is a great day for the people in the outer villages who

anxiously await the Sisters' visits, and these outings recall to us the words of our Founder, Cardinal Lavigerie: “Win souls through love. . . . But how can you love them if you don't know them, and how can you know them if you don't chat with them in the intimacy of their domestic circle?” It was many a happy person who sent the Sisters away that day with a grateful smile and a warm handclasp.

GERYVILLE

Young girls desirous of devoting their lives to the salvation of African souls as White Sisters, should apply for information to:

MOTHER SUPERIOR

WHITE SISTERS' CONVENT

MARY GLENN R-D-2

FRANKLIN, PA.

The next stop was Geryville, where our timely arrival witnessed the great Kermesse (or Bazaar) conducted by the White Fathers of the parish church. Attention! America! Africa's competition is quite keen. Among the characteristic booths of various articles to be sold, games

to test one's adroitness . . . or rather, PATIENCE . . . refreshment tent and amusement field, was the camel ride! In spite of the crucial moment when the heavens burst with marble-sized hail stones, one tells me that the Kermesse was quite a success.

The following day a clever presentation of “Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs” along with other songs and witty recitations, afforded an appropriate conclusion to the school year. This mission of Geryville with its tremendous



School of Academics, Household Science and Workshop is one of which the Sisters can be quite proud.

In between activities I passed several days in the "Book Hospital" where broken backs, split and damaged sides and torn interiors . . . of books, that is . . . pleaded with me as I put them back into shape and onto the shelf again. It wasn't exactly as exciting as working in the dispensary, but a rather indispensable job to try someone's patience!

AIN EL ARBA

This last visit on our schedule could easily have been described as the most outstanding and beautiful climax of climaxes, for here before our eyes was Ain El Arba, nestled cozy and snug between the mountain ranges of the majestic Atlases. Field after field of fig, apricot, plum, orange and lemon groves dotted the rolling hillsides. Alternating olive and eucalyptus trees paralleled the curving highway, and formed a delightful border for the agricultural and pasture lands which artistically scraped the horizon. Airplanes and herons vied with one another in their dizzy flights over a velvety verdure of earth where the luxurious fecundity of the farms gave convincing proof that "draught" simply did not exist in the vocabulary of the inhabitants of these hills.

After what seemed hours of steady, unending climbing up, up, . . . and still up . . . we reached our destination and found ourselves greeted by the whole village who

had come out for market day. We wended our way through rows of covered markets, bursting with produce of every kind and description. With the unfaltering aid of the school children, who invariably manage to find visiting White Sisters, wherever they are, we were proudly escorted to the Convent entrance.

Visiting the missions afforded us an opportunity to not only witness, but to participate in the customs of a people greatly varied from our own. For instance, the mournful tolling of the churchbells informed us of a funeral about to take place. We visited the home of the deceased, then having followed the procession through the village streets to the Church for the burial rites, we proceeded along the country roads to the distant cemetery. Along the way, the mourners answered the curate in

the ceremonial prayers and in the Rosary.

A happy contrast to the solemn event of the previous day was the procession of Scouts on the occasion of the enrollment of several youths. How proud the youngsters were to receive their badge pin and blue and gold ribbon. They are the Christians of Africa's tomorrow!

As a happy send-off, the school children had successfully demonstrated a variety of talent in their songs, dances, choral recitations and especially in their Operetta. The costumes lent much color to the program which only added to the vivid memories of my first "stage" in Africa. It couldn't have been more exciting than any theatre, for here, on the spot, I had witnessed the greatest act in the world — the act of bringing Christ to Africa!

Little Augustino was out walking with his mother, but he began playing about and lagging behind as children often do. Suddenly he fell down.

"Now God has punished you," said his mother. "I told you He does not like naughty boys."

Augustino stopped crying and said, "But Mummy, I did not feel Him push me."



"Jeannettes" in the Sahara become Scouts and promise their loyalty to an ideal which realizes an outlet to help others.

Around the Campfire

— WITH NORTH AFRICAN GIRL SCOUTS —

If you've ever sat around a campfire, singing your heart out into the fascinating flames which burn away many a sad memory, then you must know a little something of the joy that comes from being a Girl Scout, a privilege which is fast being introduced in Africa.

The aspect of Scouting, which is rapidly penetrating into the youthful lives of North Africans was first begun in Algiers when 8 "Jeannettes" — or Brownies, as

we call them — of the Lavigerie Troup made their first promises, on the happy day of October 29, 1942. About the same time another group of Scouts sprang up in Carthage, followed by a similar foundation at the Sahara Oasis called Geryville.

From this first development, companies of Scouts were later formed and began to function at Carthage in 1948, while the Companies of Algiers and of Ghardaia (Sahara Desert) followed close by

in 1949. The first experiences of Campfires were made in 1953 at Laghouat in the Sahara, and later in 1955 at Carthage.

As for the members who have profited so much from this movement, we can safely say that there are more than 500 at present, with a rapidly-increasing status. The promises which have been made since the foundation includes around 350.

What do they do—these young Africans? Their aim is more or less the same as the many green and brown-clad Scouts here at home — they learn to be upright, loyal citizens of their country, lending a hand to the many good deeds in each situation, studying the wonders of nature in which they recognize their Creator.

For example, the following is a summary of the laws of the Scouts in Algiers:

The Scout, because of her love for God, acts only with the intention of pleasing her Creator.

She is HONEST — there is but one word for her.

She is respectful towards her parents, charitable to ALL.

She always comes to the aid of others.

She is the sister to all other Scouts.

She is discreet and polite.

She does everything thoroughly.

She is mistress of self.

She protects the good of others.

She is pure in her thoughts, her words and her actions.

She always sees the work of God in creation.

The Theme of a North-African Campfire in the Sahara is quite outstanding for its depths as we can see from the chosen motto: "FRIENDSHIP — One single phrase should penetrate our lives — *Others* before me." This camp-meeting which lasted from the 28th of June to the 19th of July was attended by 7 Moslems, 4 Israelites as well as several Christians, each of whom derived her origin from a different oasis of the desert. The theme of "Friendship" was studied thoroughly throughout the session — friendship with things, friendship with nature, friendship with man. The result was that each young Scout returned with a new and strong outlook on life, overcoming the question of difficulties in meeting with races, creeds and colors other than her own, seeing all things in the light of "Friendship".

These are but slight examples of the good that is being done in uniting strong links which make up an unbreakable chain of unity among African Scouts. There is no doubt that difficulties are yet to be overcome, for such an unusual foundation so extremely revolutionary to the pattern of ancient ways has to be digested with the ages. But as these generous youths become more and more numerous, the word "Friendship" will grow into "Charity" — and then "Love"—and then: CHRIST!

The Blessed "Oued"

By SR. M. CLAVER

"Oued" is the Arabic term for river, a word of joy in the Sahara where all the population comes forth to meet this welcome sight.

One evening I witnessed a heart-rending sight if there ever was one! A man and his donkey were returning from the oasis, laden with two skin vessels full of precious water, a load of nearly 120 pounds. Both master and beast were fagged out by the day's task, after the nine mile return journey, and the ascent of the steep incline where he lived at the very top of the town, was long and tedious. At last they had arrived before the door of his house and while unloading, an accidental move had caused the cord of the skin to snap while the water escaped haphazardly down the

stairway disappearing into the street in a thin steady waterfall. Never had I seen a look of misery on anyone's face as the sight I now witnessed.

But just then a burst of thunder breaks the silence and heavy clouds are seen overhead—clouds, which to all Saharans, mean but one thing — joyous rain! In a few hours a veritable sheet of water was descending from the heavens and the cries "The Oued is come" were heard from every corner. Yes, it was true and not a mirage. The deluge had formed the river which now glided through the indented plateau where the waters

The River at Colomb-Bechar. — Photo Ofalac.



filled every crevice and crack without being absorbed by the ground. These were not but insignificant streams — it was really "the Oued".

What was but a thin stream ten minutes ago now becomes a furious torrent more than a yard wide and on every side, torrent meets torrent to amalgamate into the impetuosity of a flood which pours down the valleys where the inhabitants are waiting to greet it. As the swelling waters advance they are greeted with various names as "The White River" — "That which flows" — "That which brings life" — "That which makes things green again" — "The blessing of God" — "His Mercy!"

Now the excitement is at its highest. The Caid (the chief) in festive attire of red cloak, goes to meet "the Oued" mounted on his black steed and surrounded by numberless pedestrians. Gun salutes are heard on all sides as the stream deepens to two feet and some 70 to 120 yards wide, advancing at the speed of a horse's moderate trot.

The whole town is out: men and children, mad with joy, line the banks; women watch from the terraces in the background. The noisy, bursting uproar is indescribable!

From the banks each one hastens to secure some of the precious liquid in pail or saucepan, in receptacles of all descriptions, for everyone must taste the new water, muddy and foaming and positively disgusting though it be. It is almost an established rite to

drink of it and to relish its "sweetness".

Meanwhile the waters have reached the great barrier and they turn back with an eddying swirl. Then the water level rises and in so doing meets the openings to wells specially dug into the bed of the Oued. These fill with hasty turbulence. The river fills the valleys, overflows into neighboring fields and even inundates roads. In a little time the whole country has become one surging mass of water!

Once it stops raining the sources dry up, the current loses violence little by little, and in a few hours the river, steadied by the barriers, settles into a large lake whose waters soak into the soil and assure a living to the country that will last according to the abundance of the flood.

The water level lowers imperceptibly. Sometimes after a month, or more, only a few puddles remain here and there. The whole river bed is covered with a thick layer of slimy clay which in time dries up and cracks. This "tin," as the people call it, they put to very many uses of their own.

Thus the bright sun having fulfilled its role once more, transforms the "River" into a dry bed of burning sand! One wonders if it is really true; if a few hours' rain could produce such a prodigious supply of water; if all trace of it could really disappear in so short a time.

To anyone who has not seen it for himself it all sounds incredible, but I can assure you that it is a sight worth seeing!



NEWS

Two African Sisters have the privilege of talking with His Eminence Cardinal Fumasoni Biondi, whom they met at Castle Gondolfo. These Bannabikira (Daughters of Mary) from Uganda were trained to the Religious Life by the White Sisters. They are now staying with the White Sisters in Rome while studying at Regina Mundi, the Institute of Higher Studies for Religious.

The two Sisters who disappeared at Ighil-Ali, Kabylia, North Africa, Sept. 13th have been released. It was on the evening of Oct. 16th as they were being escorted to their convent by the F.L.N. (Arab troops), that one of them, Sister Pierre Fourier, was accidentally killed during a skirmish at night fall. As related by her companion, who was delivered safely to her

convent and who testified with precision of the entire respect with which they were treated, Sister Pierre Fourier explicitly offered her life to God "for peace in Algeria and fraternal union among men."

The White Sisters formally deny that Sister was deliberately killed. She lost her life on the mountain slopes in the heat of battle; and all that has been written or said contrary to this statement is false.

Sister Theresia, a White Sister, who is now in her 76th year, still goes to visit and care for the sick in the villages distant from her mission, though she must now make use of a cane to help her along the way. Sister also prepares the children in these villages for their First Holy Communion.

Give
CHRISTMAS JOY
to
SUCH AS THESE



As Christmas approaches you prepare to share your joys with those who are nearest and dearest to you. But who is nearer and dearer than the Infant Savior Himself . . . What are you going to do for Him?

Remember Jesus considers as done for Himself what is done for His poor ones. So then, anything you will give the White Sisters to help make happy the 60,000 poor African children, under their care, will bring happiness to our Infant Savior. He will bless you and 2,000 White Sisters will pray for you. Then yours will be a Christmas filled with lasting joy.

WHITE SISTERS, 319 MIDDLESEX AVE., METUCHEN, N.J.

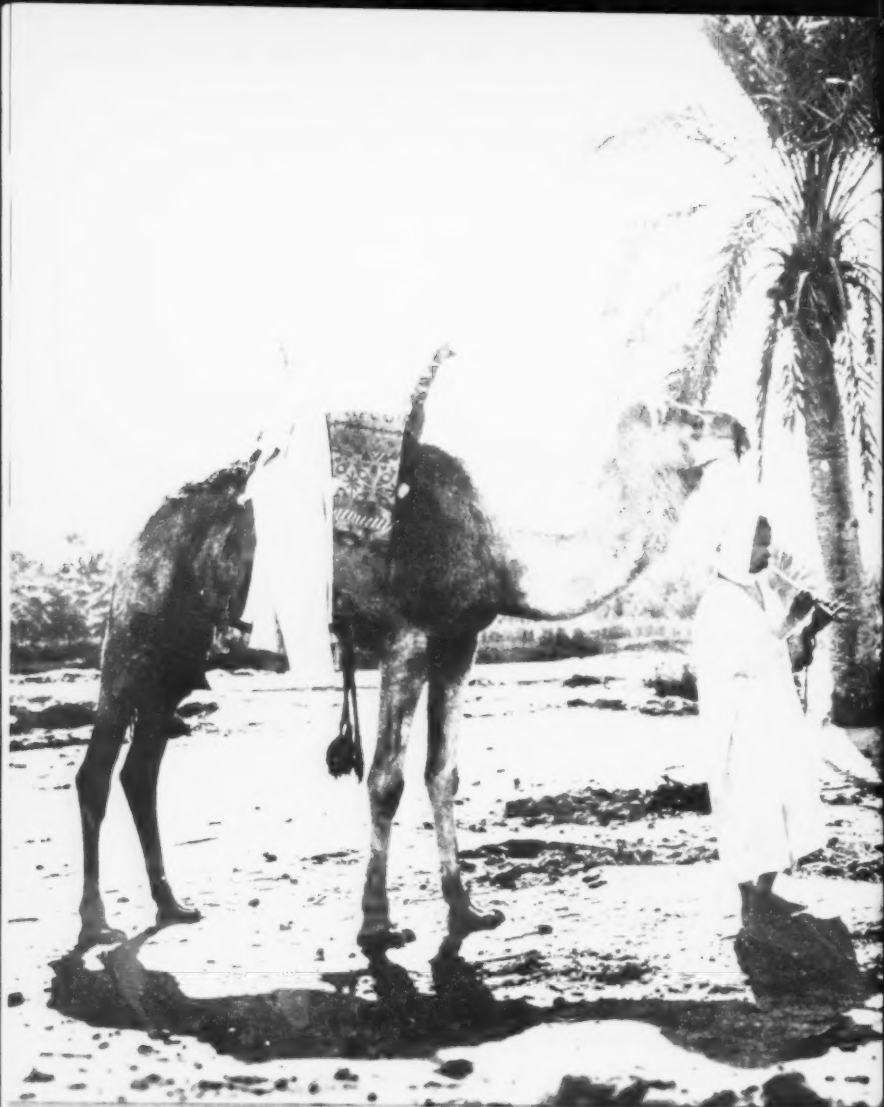
Dear Sisters:

I am sending you an offering \$..... to give joy and happiness to Our Infant Savior through your poor African children.

Name

Address

City Zone State



Missionary Sisters of Our Lady of Africa

